

European Roma Summit

Brussels, 16 September 2008

Conference report

CONTENTS

- I. Introduction*
- II. Opening Speech*
- III. Time to Act-Building a Strong Partnership for Roma Inclusion*
- IV. Global Responsibility*
- V. Policies that Work: A Can-Do-Approach to Inclusion*
- VI. Rights Based Perspective*
- VII. The Way Forward-Towards Concrete Steps for Improvement*
- VIII. Conclusions*

I. Introduction

This European Roma Summit took place in Brussels on September 16th 2008 and was the first time that EU institutions, national governments and civil society organisations from across Europe came together at the highest level to discuss the situation of Roma communities in the EU and to find ways to improve it.

The event was organised by the European Commission together with the French Presidency of the EU, following recent developments; in December 2007, the European Council acknowledged for the first time that Roma populations

across the EU face a very specific situation. Consequently, the Council called upon Member States and the European Union to use all means possible to improve the inclusion of Roma people. To this end, the Council invited the Commission “to examine existing policies and instruments and to report to the Council on progress achieved before the end of June 2008¹”.

The European Parliament in its Resolution of 31 January 2008 urged the European Commission to pursue an overall strategy for social inclusion of Roma.

Responding to the call of the European Council, on July 2008 the Commission issued a Communication and an accompanying Staff Working Document, which set out a renewed commitment to non-discrimination in general, with an emphasis on action to improve the situation of Roma in particular. The Staff Working Document listed and examined the Community instruments and policies available for Roma inclusion, and called for a joint response to tackle Roma exclusion and discrimination in the EU.²

The Summit thus constituted the following step in this process and aimed to support and promote a joint commitment by the Member States, the EU institutions and civil society.

These aims were presented by President Barroso in his opening speech: “I am firmly convinced that this Roma Summit represents a unique opportunity for getting the problems of the Roma higher on the agenda than ever before (...) It is our urgent task to ensure that this Roma Summit makes a difference. After all, it has perhaps the highest-level political participation in history and brings together also an unprecedented number of actors from Roma civil society. And there is, or should be, also a much more clear sense of direction than ever before.”

¹ http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf

² Commission Staff Working Paper accompanying Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Non-discrimination and Equal Opportunities: A Renewed Commitment; Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion, {COM(2008) 420}

The conference, as the first high-level meeting on the inclusion of Roma served as an opportunity for participants to exchange views and make commitments in this respect, which will be communicated to the French Presidency of the European Council. These will be also taken into account during examination of the renewed Social Agenda by the Council.

The Conference was structured around an introductory panel “Time to Act – Building a strong partnership for Roma Integration” and a closing panel “The Way Forward” as well as three political panels “Global Responsibility”, “Policies that Work - A Can-Do-Approach” and “Rights Based Perspective”.

More than 500 representatives of EU institutions, national governments, parliaments and civil society took part, including Roma organisations. European Commission President Barroso, Vice-President Barrot (Justice and Home affairs) and Commissioners Špidla (Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities), and Commissioner Figel (Education, training, culture and youth) were among the speakers, as well as Christine Boutin, Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs (on behalf of the French EU Presidency), several ministers from EU Member States and candidate countries. Each panel discussion was preceded by key note address, made by the following individuals;

- Mr George Soros, Chair of the Open Society Institute,
- Mario Betati, representative of Bernard Kouchner, the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
- Mr Shigeo Katsu, Vice-President of the World Bank
- Mr Romani Rose, President of the German Central Council of Sinti and Roma.

This report summarizes proceedings, findings and outcomes of the Conference following the structure of the programme.

II. Opening Speech³: Mr José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission

³ The presentations in this report are not verbatim, except for the opening speech of President Barroso.

“President in office, Excellencies, Honourable Members of the European and of national Parliaments, Dear Mr Soros, Dear Vice-president Katsu, Dear Mr Rose, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to open this first-ever European Roma Summit in Brussels. But it is, of course, also a great responsibility. The problem which we are facing together - as politicians and citizens, as members of majority societies and as Roma - is one of great urgency. It is urgent not just in political terms, but above all in human terms.

Since the enlargement of the European Union in this decade the number of Roma or Roma-related people living within our borders has increased significantly. Most of these people are European citizens. Yet they represent the largest ethnic group ever to be facing extreme poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and racism on our territory. 77% of Europeans think that being Roma is a disadvantage in society, on a par with being disabled (79%).

We have only rather vague estimates of how many Roma there are in the European Union. What is clear is that they are one of the biggest ethnic minorities in the UE, with millions of people living in most Member States. However, most of these millions live in conditions which are simply not acceptable in 21st-century Europe. And it is becoming increasingly evident that Roma often face the same levels of social exclusion, no matter which Member State they live in.

What makes this situation particularly worrying is the lack of perspectives faced by the young Roma generation. The Roma population is a young one, with a very substantial proportion being under 20 years of age. In the "knowledge society" of the 21st century, the educational disadvantages faced by Roma children and young people can result in an even greater gap between them and mainstream populations. Lack of skills increasingly means wasted lives. It is, of course, a terrible loss for the human beings concerned, but in the context of the goals set by the Lisbon Strategy, it is also a loss for whole societies.

Let us be frank: There is no place for a laissez-faire or business-as-usual approach. Unless fundamental change happens, millions of young Roma will face nothing else than a lifetime of social exclusion and marginalisation. Unless hope enters Roma neighbourhoods, shantytowns and makeshift settlements, despair will prevail. If despair prevails, these places will inevitably become zones of insecurity for their inhabitants and for the mainstream societies which surround them. To some extent this is already happening, but it can get much worse.

Mainstream societies need to offer the Roma a real, practical chance to improve their perspectives – in the interest of the Roma and in their own interest.

Of course, social exclusion and marginalisation affect not only the Roma population. But the situation of this particular group is characterized by persisting discrimination. European and national surveys show that many Europeans take negative views on this group which are often based on stereotypes and prejudice. And we know how perceptions can be more important than reality in creating the right – or the wrong – environment for change. Civil society and, in particular, the media sector, have special responsibility and a crucial role to play in this context. Indeed, the media are well placed to fight against negative perceptions and stereotypes and to bring best practices into the light. They can therefore contribute to illustrate backgrounds to conflicts and to promote mutual knowledge and understanding between majority and minority cultures.

Quite often, we hear actors from mainstream societies putting the blame for this tragic situation on the Roma themselves, on their way of life. Many people tend to say that the starting point for change must come from an increased sense of responsibility among the Roma, of each and every Romany man, woman and child. On the other hand, Roma civil society leaders mostly tend to emphasize that they expect urgent action to start from public authorities.

As a matter of fact, we need both. We need increased action by public authorities and majority societies as well as increased civic responsibility among the Roma - but in that order. I strongly believe that the duties of public authorities should come first.

Of course, we should not paint the Roma as mere passive victims. But we must be aware of that huge disproportion of power between what our affluent, well-organised societies can do and what the Roma themselves can achieve.

Of course we should acknowledge that it is often the Roma community itself which oppresses the Roma individual. Indeed, protection of individual rights of all Roma children, women and men must be our highest value. But we cannot effectively ensure these rights unless we deal effectively with exclusion, discrimination and racism which these individuals face from dominant societies.

Of course we should encourage the Roma to become active subjects of their destiny and to take responsibilities for their lives, individually and collectively. But we must first offer them real opportunities. People grow into citizens - in the full sense of the word - only if they get an opportunity to do so.

What kind of opportunities, then? Mainstream education. Mainstream jobs. Mainstream housing. How do we get there?

To remove obstacles for a group as disadvantaged as the Roma are, we need more than just non-discrimination. These people have been so excluded - by majority societies as well as by their own traditions - that they are simply not starting from the same point like most other citizens. We need more than just treating the Roma "like everyone else", although even that is often very far from being the case.

We must reach out to the Roma. For that we can build on experience with positive action in a number of Member States and in fields such as gender equality. Our policies must take ethno-cultural differences and entrenched social disadvantages into account. But their ultimate aim should be to open for the Roma effective access to mainstream education, jobs and housing - and not to create or maintain some kind of parallel system of education, employment and housing.

We need a strong commitment to the ideals of equality combined with a healthy degree of economic pragmatism. Public policies addressed to the Roma should deal above all with the harsh socio-economic realities of their lives. What we need are constructive policies for active support to the education of Roma children; for culturally sensitive job counselling; or for the promotion of legitimate self-employment through management courses, microcredit and other instruments. Also the potential role of the private sector has so far been largely overlooked. Yet these are important pathways for stimulating Roma inclusion in formalised economic activities!

Inclusion of Roma is a joint responsibility of the European Union and the Member States. The instruments for creating change are mainly in the hands of the Member States. Key policies for the inclusion of Roma are in Member States' competence, though they are or can be coordinated at the Community level.

The European Commission can help through its legislative instruments, such as the non-discrimination Directives; through its financial instruments, such as the Structural Funds and the PROGRESS programme as well as through its information campaigns and support of capacity building.

However, we must avoid giving the impression that the dramatic situation of the Roma can be solved from Brussels. Such an approach would be irresponsible. It is by sending a clear political message to the Member States about the urgent need to act that the European Commission can exercise its role of political leadership in this area. Moreover, the Commission can also play an active role by providing policy guidance and stimulating the exchange of good practices between Member States. In this context, the idea of a European Platform for Roma Inclusion might be a useful one. Mutual learning and joint analysis can help to

bring the promote inclusion across the EU. What is needed is the political will to use the available instruments in favour of the Roma.

Finally, let me mention also the plight of the Roma outside the European Union. The Commission will continue applying the Copenhagen criteria and focusing on the conditions of the Roma in its dialogue with candidate countries.

In this context, the laudable efforts of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, launched by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute, deserve to be mentioned. This is an initiative which unites Member States as well as those which are at present outside the Union, and allows for valuable exchange of experiences. I am happy to say that the European Commission has always given its full political support to this initiative.

President in office, Excellencies, Honourable Members of the European and of national Parliaments, Dear Mr Soros, Dear Vice-president Katsu, Dear Mr Rose, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am firmly convinced that this "Roma Summit" represents a unique opportunity for getting the problems of the Roma higher on the agenda than ever before. Last December, the European Council has addressed the issue of the Roma for the first time; now we have the first high-level conference of the EU on "Roma affairs". We should all try to get the most out of it.

Many of you present here have been, of course, to many events concerning Roma which were organised by other actors such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE, who have long been involved in this area. Many wise recommendations have already been pronounced in those forums, but they were often not followed. It is our urgent task to ensure that this Roma Summit makes a difference.

After all, it has perhaps the highest-level political participation in history and brings together also an unprecedented number of actors from Roma civil society. And there is, or should be, also a much more clear sense of direction than ever before.

I wish you all an extremely inspiring, creative and productive Summit."

III. Time to Act - Building a strong partnership for Roma Inclusion

The aim of an introductory panel was to discuss a need for a new partnership for Roma Integration as well as the role of various stakeholders and actors in this partnership. Both key note speaker Mr George Soros and discussants in the panel agreed on the basic premise of the introductory session: there is a unique momentum to build a strong partnership for Roma inclusion that will include all actors – representatives of European Commission, Member States as well as Roma themselves. The European Roma Platform, as called upon by President Barroso, should follow and reinforce basic EU values of non-discrimination, social solidarity and respect for human rights.

Moreover, as Mr George Soros put it, there is a certain need for the European Commission to exercise firm political leadership to guide this process, despite the fact that creation and implementation of key policies in the area of Roma inclusion are the responsibility of the Member States. As President Barroso stated in his opening address, the European Commission can and should play its leadership role in this regard not only by coordinating member states' policies at Community level, not only through its various financial and policy programs, not only by providing policy guidance and space for the exchange of good practices between various stakeholders, but mainly by sending a clear political message to the Member States as to the urgency of action.

Strong and active commitment, participation and responsibility sharing on behalf of the Roma were recognized throughout whole panel. As French Minister Ms Boutin phrased it; “we need to learn to work together, to accept to work in partnership”.

Mr Nicolae Gheorghe asserted that main reason for the failure of many previous EU or other Roma oriented programmes was lack of participation of Roma as well as lack of autonomy of Roma civil society, as many of civil society groups used governmental or EU money to provide services for Roma communities. Nevertheless, the need for self reflection by Roma civil society was also identified as crucial - as Mr Gheorghe said; “we need to give Roma platforms

a coherent voice". Participants agreed that there is a necessity to build a Roma elite as well, that Roma should be employed in European Commission, Council of Europe or United Nations, not based on affirmative actions, but based on their indisputable qualities. Member of European Parliament Ms Livia Járóka proposed to create and run an EC financed leadership program that will train current local level Roma leaders. However, the primary role in this regards lies on the education system as Commissioner for Education, Training and Culture Mr Jan Figel stated.

Mr Soros underlined the important role of the Decade of Roma Inclusion as an initiative that can and should be developed through this new process. In her final remarks, Czech Minister for Human Rights and Minorities Ms Stehlikova followed with a pledge to open up this process also to non member states during the Czech presidency.

Answering the moderator's question regarding key qualities that Roma oriented programs need to include, Commissioner Špidla underlined a complex and multifaceted approach, stressing that actions can no longer address only one area of life, but must look at the situation of Roma from a complex perspective and search for complex solutions. As part of each action, continuous dialogue with Roma is a must. But he underlined that ahead of all this there needs to be the courage of few individuals to take a decision for positive action.

Minister Stehlikova presented an example of such a complex and multifaceted approach, which was adopted recently by the Czech government. This is a state programme helping actors on local level to create and implement complex multifaceted Roma inclusion strategies that are tailored to the needs of local communities (both Roma and non Roma) with the ultimate goal of improved standards of living for everyone.

Member of European Parliament Ms Livia Járóka followed Commissioner Špidla's line of thought with her pledge for a paradigm shift in examining Roma inclusion policies and programs. These policies and programs need to consider Roma and non-Roma; they need to incorporate a shared vision but also shared

responsibilities. Ms Járóka believes that only through such uniting platforms we will obtain a decisive effect.

Ms Viktoria Mohácsi, also Member of European Parliament, called for a targeted approach, as she claimed that governments need to channel money to Roma programmes through mainstream mechanisms. She believes that the primary responsibility for the improvement of the Roma situation lies with governments and the majority that pushed Roma to ghettos, segregated schools or dumps.

Commissioner Špidla summed up the introductory panel discussion by saying that; “effective solutions need a long term perspective, they have to be enacted and implemented by Member States. The European Commission can give a political push to help Member States and Council to adopt these decisions. Furthermore, the European Commission should and will foster inclusion by combating discrimination and by promoting freedom of movement. Roma inclusion needs to be taken into account in all existing policies and mechanisms of sharing good practices; by fostering analytical work; by fostering partnership with civil society; by holding events like the European Roma Summit to play a leadership role.” Ms Boutin joined Commissioner Špidla in his call for concrete and down to earth proposals that will concentrate on effective problem solving.

IV. Global Responsibility

The aim of this panel was to discuss the challenge of placing the issue of Roma inclusion in a global context. The chair of the panel Mr Mihnea Constantinescu summarised this challenge in his introductory remarks when asked “Is it wise to talk about global responsibility and global solutions, when many Roma seek local focus?” The definition of global responsibility, the solutions that make difference in life, and its concrete examples were thus the subject of discussion.

A representative of the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs left no doubt in his key note (delivered on behalf of French Minister of Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner) address that the discussion about Roma inclusion needs to be framed within a global responsibility and solutions paradigm. Roma are the biggest European minority, they are part of Europe therefore their fate is that of the whole EU. Furthermore, through the promotion of EU values and requirements on other European states, we need to look outside EU boundaries when talking about Roma inclusion. In his speech, Mr Kouchner's representative reminded us that these same values and requirements the EU imposes on others through the Copenhagen criteria need to be obeyed by Member States as well. This statement was orchestrated by Swedish Minister Ms Nyamko Sabuni and the President of the International Roma Women's Network Ms Soraya Post, when denouncing current Italian ethnic profiling practice as betraying EU values. Minister Sabuni continued by stating that this is however the case in many other Member States and governments need to take their own responsibility to start to effectively solve issues of Roma exclusion and poverty.

Ms Post added that without a reconciliation process that would recognize Roma suffering throughout European history and without the firm participation of Roma we cannot really talk about global responsibility and global solutions.

Mr Rudko Kawczynski, President of European Roma and Travellers Forum, further challenged the paradigm by claiming that despite various efforts very little change has been observed. Roma are living in conditions that are worse than ever before in Europe. He claims that the main problem is total lack of Roma participation and Roma involvement.

Minister Nezdet Mustafa, as the first Roma minister in the Macedonian government (and in Europe) put it bluntly – the key factor in ensuring the success of the institutional efforts dedicated to Roma issues across Europe is the direct participation of Roma in the institutions. This is the path to Roma integration on all levels.

EP member Ms Magda Kósáné Kovacs challenged the global responsibility and solutions paradigm by saying that we can talk about global responsibility and solutions only if all actors are fully free, which is not the case. She reminded the audience that the majority of the Roma minority comes from Central Eastern Europe where they share a similar fate of post communist poverty, while EU enlargement (with its Copenhagen criteria that may be seen as global solution mechanism) added very little benefit to their lives.

While presenting the priorities of his country during the Decade of Roma Inclusion, Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Djelic added that the Decade serves as an important example of such a shared responsibility and solution process. It prevails in its importance as a bridge between Member States and candidate countries as well as new countries. The Decade is also important because it gives a voice to Roma, and he is a firm believer in the empowerment of Roma followed by responsibility sharing.

Mr Constantinescu summed up the discussion by underlining his belief that despite all the challenges, renewed European solidarity turns to Roma, creating a momentum for new solutions and new partnerships, as no solution without partnership can be successful. However, it is important to focus on the practical aspects rather than referring to general policies. Through various examples it was demonstrated that there are successful projects, successful patterns and successful approaches which can make a real difference. Although access to education, health or labour market as an exercise of human rights creates a global responsibility that requires global solutions, basic responsibility towards the citizens still lies with the state. This is responsibility associated with good governance.

V. Policies that Work: A Can-Do-Approach to Inclusion

The aim of this panel was to receive input from panellists on the key factors for success of practical programs and policies for Roma inclusion. Speakers concentrated their contributions around practices, methods and

measures for tackling Roma integration that gave successful results within concrete time, special and circumstantial limitations. The possibilities for their transfer and criteria for success were debated.

As stated by Mr Shigeo Katsu, Vice-president of the World Bank, there are plenty of pilot projects that have proven to be successful, however, these did not adopt a systemic approach – which is one of the main obstacles for progress – it is a real challenge for European countries to shift from a piloting to a systemic approach – e.g. discussions about segregation in education need to be embedded into broader systemic policies and plans. The second criterion of successful approach, as proposed by Vice-president Katsu, is existence of critical targets - as he put it; “what does not get measured will not get done”. He proposed to use knowledge and expertise of Eurostat in creating a common data collection or evidence based research. Furthermore, he claimed that aside from adopting proven good examples there is a crucial need for experimenting. As the situation has proven to be catastrophic on many occasions, no simple solutions can be found, thus experimentation comprising post-evaluation mechanisms is important. Drawing from experience that has proved effective in other parts of the world may be of help (e.g. WB conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America).

Mr Katsu then took up one of the European Platform’s ideas, presented by President Barroso and argued that a policy coordination centre, whatever form it takes, is an integral part of any successful approach. He supported the idea of further developing the Decade of Roma Inclusion as such possible forum. Last but not least, every successful approach needs to be financed. Structural Funds of the EU are therefore an important tool for the successful realization of such a policy. This is however not enough, as the capacity of people working with these finances needs to be build up at a national level in order to use these resources effectively.

The last point was developed by several panellists arguing that the role of Structural Funds may go beyond traditionally understood mechanisms. Mr Andor Ürmös from the Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour presented the desegregation programme of the Hungarian Government, consisting of

requesting desegregation plans from municipalities and regions that apply for EU funds in the fields of education and housing. Segregation in education and housing is one of the main barriers confronting Roma and many local authorities lack any strategy to address this problem in systemic way. Using European Structural Funds as a channel for improvement through the mainstreaming of anti-segregation policies is a tool that may bring progress in the everyday life of Roma. By virtue of this government policy there are now 170 desegregation plans in Hungary.

The Director of the Spanish Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) Mr Isidro Rodriguez also agreed that Structural Funds are the driving force for integration of Roma but its potential is yet to be exploited. The European Commission should exercise their power when discussing and negotiating programmes to make sure that Roma are an integral, -and not only horizontal-, priority of the relevant operational programs. The European Commission should also make sure that member states have appropriate channels of communication and can enable the exchange of good practices. Mr Rodriguez pointed to the need for combining mainstreaming and targeting approaches which he demonstrated on the successful *Acceder* project realized by FSG. Furthermore, he stressed that the key factors of the success of any program are to be found in adopting transparent and quality management systems as well as incorporating intercultural and professional aspects in terms of methodology development, evaluation and work with clients.

Mr Ivan Gabal from the Czech Republic believes that successful policy needs to be based on knowledge. He believes that the main factor contributing to failures of current and previous policies is the lack of precise and relevant information and knowledge. Only when have made a clear assessment of the situation can we react with tailored policies. He demonstrated this need by using the Czech example of a study that mapped socially excluded areas in the Czech Republic. In this instance, only when faced with a truly dramatic picture, were politicians willing to undertake a new and complex approach (mentioned previously by Minister Stehlikova). This was seconded by the Italian Undersecretary of State for Employment, Health and Social Policies Ms Roccella,

who explained that only after an assessment of the situation of legal and illegal Roma living in Italy, did the government undertake important actions concerning health, school integration or legal status. It must be noted however, that many participants left then the room in protest against the controversial ethnic registration of Roma in Italy.

Ms Anne-Marie Sigmund from European Economic and Social Committee believes that the only way forward is through partnership and cooperation. Unless both sides gain trust there is very little chance for progress. She is a believer in a joint vision and joint action that involves all relevant players.

Mr Rumyan Russinov, Deputy Director of the Roma Education Fund, followed with the argument that the same is valid at a local level, sometimes to an even greater extent, as often engagement of Roma parents in planning their children's education may be decisive in the success of the programme or project. He further added that there is a crucial need for a central organisation to collect and share good practices examples. The Roma Education Fund has gathered a number of good practices examples in the area of education (government desegregation programs, scholarships for students' programs, methodological tools for integrated education etc.), that are effective and that can be used in different countries.

Summing up the discussion, all participants agreed that there are programmes and projects that have proved effective and successful. Although there are various factors contributing to their success, participants pointed out that:

- There is time to make a shift from a piloting to a systematic approach;
- Mainstreaming with a targeted approach is valid and effective;
- Development of policies in partnership with all actors;
- Use of European Structural Funds is crucial;
- Policies need to be based on knowledge;
- There is a need for the exchange of information and good practices among decision makers, experts, and people from the field.

VI. Rights Based Perspective

The aim of this panel was to focus on the issues of rights: human rights, fundamental rights and social rights. A starting point of all speakers was the acknowledgement in one way or another that discrimination against Roma exists everywhere and is publicly supported.

Key note speaker Mr Romani Rose portrayed the situation of Roma rights as one of extreme gravity and noted that “apartheid still persists in Europe”. He drew attention to the fact that whereas events in Italy receive a great deal of attention, many other fronts where the situation is of similar importance are overlooked. He believes that the future prospects for Roma are not optimistic since previous commitments proved to be ineffective. Mr Rose stated that the integration of minorities should be seen as a core part of the system of values the EU represents and called for the recognition of Roma as a national minority in the member states. Programmes for improving the social and educational situation of the Roma minorities must be implemented to a far greater extent, and provisions for the protection against discrimination and criminalisation and the stigmatising of public reporting of Roma should be enhanced. In this sense, he demanded that the prohibition of discrimination of the Race Equality Directive extends its application to public authorities and state offices.

Reaction to the controversial measures adopted in Italy to conduct registrations of Roma in Italian cities had been present throughout the day and several speakers had referred to them in critical terms. The Vice-president of the Commission and Commissioner on Justice and Home Affairs Mr Jacques Barrot, underlined that the Commission had noted that the Italian Government had committed itself to follow the Commission’s request of receiving clear information on the scope and practice of the measures adopted with a view to register Roma residing in Italy, and that the last plan of measures presented in August was not censorable by the Commission. Nevertheless, he committed

himself to ensure a close monitoring of the application and reassured the audience that he would not allow any practice incompatible with the Community Law. On a different point, he announced that the Commission is preparing action in relation to the recently honoured Bulgarian journalists known for his articles attacking Roma in offensive and racist terms. He also announced a closer cooperation with the Fundamental Rights Agency.

Former Member of European Parliament Mr Juan de Dios Ramírez welcomed the commitment of Vice-president Barrot and assured Mr Barrot that the Roma will be monitoring the fulfilment of his commitment.

The Chairperson of board of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Ms Anastasia Crickley remarked that the commitment of the FRA to place Roma at the centre of the FRA agenda and to ensure that the recommendations contained in the reports are heard. The FRA will link more closely with the Council of Europe and with Roma, Sinti and Traveller organizations. She noted that all actors have a role to play from the local to the European level, further stressing that “engaging the EU is not an option but an obligation”. Nevertheless she remarked that work is in progress at all levels and we should all acknowledge the extent of the task. Ms Crickley stressed the need for a strong leadership, acknowledgement of the dimension of the problem, ensuring the implementation of the instruments in place, and designing and implementing targeted actions with improved coordination.

Mr Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director of the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) stated that much of the problem lies with the lack of enforcement and implementation of the existing legislation and policies and suggested carrying out an evaluation of what both the EU and the member states have done in the Roma rights field. In what regards the need for new approaches, Mr Ivanov pointed out that the way forward should strike a balance between socio-economic dimension as well as identity respect since the deep-rooted disadvantage of Roma is encased within these two dimensions. Lastly, he made clear that the Roma movement is awaiting a proper follow up of this summit.

Mr Valeriu Nicolae from the European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) began by stating his deep concern over the Commission's position in relation to the Italian authorities. He also acknowledged, along with other panellists, that the living and working conditions of Roma have not improved over recent decades and that policies and measures have used fragmented approaches, inefficient to address the complexity of the situation Roma face in Europe. He extended this criticism to the rhetoric used when it comes to Roma "which equates social inclusion with assimilation, indicators with wishful thinking, and progress with paper work". Building on these views, he called for a number of developments along the lines of adopting a Framework European Strategy on Roma, establishing a coordination structure on Roma issues at the level of the European Commission, developing monitoring mechanisms of the situation of Roma in the EU member states and accession countries and developing Community data relating to Roma. Furthermore, he called for the creation of a European network of Roma experts for enhancing the production of analysis and research, and for greater support to Roma NGOs at all levels in order to monitor implementation of Roma-related policies and programmes.

Some speakers referred to the positive contribution Roma and Sinti had had to the development of Europe. In particular, former Member of the European Parliament Mr Juan de Dios Ramírez enthusiastically encouraged the Roma in the audience to feel proud of their Romani origins and to place value in the important contributions of Roma culture to European societies. He also reinforced the message that it is time to move from words to action.

President of the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) Mr Mohammed Aziz highlighted the key findings of the Shadow Report on the Situation of Roma in Europe (which this European network had issued the day right before the summit). He gave an account of the extreme gravity of manifestations of anti-gypsism and Romaphobia which result in frequent violations of the rights of Roma to education, housing, healthcare and employment. He called attention to the increasing practices of ethnic profiling against Roma in a number of European countries. Mr Aziz summarized the recommendations contained in the aforementioned report, proposing to take

into serious consideration the introduction of positive duty on public bodies to eliminate discrimination and promote equality as exists in the UK. He concluded by stating that, given the gravity of the situation, some thought should also be given to positive discrimination measures. The need to collect accurate data must also be addressed. A further suggestion was to enable the Fundamental Rights Agency to conduct investigations.

The last speaker in the panel, Bulgarian Deputy Minister Mr Filipov, noted various gaps at the level of practice, which should be overcome in order to move in the right direction. He pointed out that the Roma Decade should receive more targeted funding. On the other hand he pointed to the need for the EU to establish conditionality for the provision of funding in order to challenge the ineffectiveness of a departmentalised utilization of these funds by the member state's governments. Besides this, he also expressed criticism towards some NGOs for not engaging sufficiently the participation of the Roma. In his view, the autonomy of Roma organizations should be guaranteed. Furthermore he called for the creation of a crisis fund for the integration of Roma populations, pointing out that in ten years time addressing this need will be more costly.

VII. The Way forward – Toward Concrete Steps for Improvement

Spanish Secretary of State Ms Amparo Valcarce Garcia gave an insight into the Spanish Government's approach, emphasizing that this combines the socio-economic perspective with participation and cultural promotion. Furthermore she believes that programmes and policies must be designed according to the principles of integrality and sustainability. In summary, the key points she presented were;

- The situation of Roma concerns both the EU and the Member States.
- It is necessary to manage the European Funds effectively and to ensure the implementation of anti-discrimination instruments.

- To work upon the basis of mixed networks, bringing together representatives of state actors and civil society, while also involving the media as a key actor for challenging prejudices and stereotypes.
- More accurate data is needed which will allow longitudinal studies and determine more precisely what works and what does not work.

Mr Andrzej Mirga from the OSCE/ODHIR Contact Point for Roma/Sinti underlined that progress must be seen as a long term process but it is high time to move from overproduction of recommendations to effective action. In order to orientate this way forward he emphasized the need for enhanced mechanisms of mutual learning and exchange, for the coordination of efforts among different actors and for striking the balance between the action to be taken by the European Union and the responsibility the national governments which should never be passed to the European level.

Mr Mirga pointed out that the conditions on how the EU Structural Funds have worked and will work should be further assessed.

In conclusion, the way forward depends largely on the capacity of demonstrating a strong leadership by the part of the key actors. Mr Mirga acknowledged that all summit participants had witnessed strong commitments from Mr Barroso and other top ranking decision-makers.

VIII. Conclusions

Commissioner Špidla closed the summit by putting forwards several conclusions. He highlighted some of the findings of the summit by acknowledging that first of all much remains to be done to ensure that Roma can live in Europe without discrimination as well as ensuring their full inclusion in education, economy and society. In this regard, Commissioner Špidla emphasized the time for change has now come and he marked the summit as the turning point for a renewed process that will leave behind approaches which

proved ineffective and that will adopt others, that will take into account different dimensions of the question and the lessons learnt.

Along with many of the speakers of the day, Commissioner Špidla pointed to the need for continuing efforts at both European and Member State level on the issue of shared responsibility. Political vision by both the EC and member states is required to create equal opportunities for all. He assured that the Commission will welcome renewed partnerships, strengthen its coordinating role and continue providing financial support, whereas he acknowledged that the contributions from MS governments during the summit gave reasons for hope; success is possible.

The grounds for new partnerships also include relations with civil society. Commissioner Špidla declared his satisfaction with the EU Roma Policy Coalition Declaration on the occasion of the summit (handed out to attendees in the afternoon) which in general terms expressed the commitment of the member organizations to join forces for supporting the fight against discrimination and putting an end to the cycle of poverty and exclusion that many Roma find themselves in.

Lastly, he remarked on the initiative mentioned by President Barroso for an integrated European Platform for the Social Inclusion of Roma, which should be discussed at the European Council in December.

In a closing remark, the Director-General for Employment, Social affairs and Equal Opportunities Mr Nikolaus G. van der Pas, thanked all the participants for their attendance and assured the audience there will be a follow up of the summit.